

Big Man on the Campus: Police Undercover Agent

By ANTHONY RIPLEY **MAR 29 1971**
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ALBUQUERQUE, N. M., March 27—There is a new man on campus among the freaks and fraternity men, the athletes and the esthetes, the bookish types and the bomb throwers. He is the spy.

He has not come to study Russian or Chinese or to prepare himself to infiltrate some foreign nation. Instead, his mission is to watch the students, the faculty and the off-campus crowds.

Though such undercover activity was almost unheard of five years ago, it has now become almost a permanent institution on the American college scene.

It is the product of student turmoil—rioting, bombing, arson, strikes, demonstrations—and the widespread drug problem.

The police defend their undercover tactics as the only practical way to enforce drug laws and to keep watch on radical campus activities, which, they fear, might trigger disturbances in the surrounding community.

What is happening around the country shows up in sharp relief at the University of New Mexico. In fact, reports from college campuses coast to coast

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indicate there is nothing at all extraordinary about such incidents as these:

• A semi-undercover state policeman, Jack E. Johnson, was seen on the campus from the fall of 1969 to the summer of 1970. He generally tried to blend in with the students and carried a Brownie Instamatic camera. His presence was publicly announced on several occasions. Once he was spotted and identified at a closed faculty meeting and was asked to leave. Mr. Johnson is now back on uniformed patrol duty near Albuquerque.

• Two city narcotics agents were discovered by students living in Coronado Hall, a dormitory for men. The agents left quietly soon after they were identified and both city and university officials confirmed their presence.

• A city policeman using false press credentials posed as an Associated Press photographer during demonstrations last spring protesting the invasion of Cambodia. Howard Graves, the AP bureau chief in Albuquerque, complained to the police, who promised it would not happen again.

• Unspecified law enforcement agencies requested permission to place undercover agents on the campus but were refused by university officials.

Displeased but Helpless

Like most of the officials at the other colleges that reported

similar incidents, school officials here were not pleased with the snooping but felt helpless in keeping undercover men from either enrolling as regular students or mixing with off-campus crowds.

"We do not condone or encourage such activity," said Harold W. Lavender, vice president for student affairs. "Neither can we prevent it. We've had opportunities to deliberately enroll undercover agents and we have, in high dudgeon, turned them down."

John S. Todd, an assistant to the Albuquerque city manager who is responsible for police matters, said undercover men were assigned to the university area whenever there were "specific instances of illegal activity" such as narcotics use. Agents are also assigned, he said, when "feeling is developing" over a campus political issue or national political issue.

Mr. Todd said it was only "prudent" to watch radical activities that might spill over from the campus to the surrounding city.

The bulk of the nation's undercover work is done by local police officers or outsiders hired by the state, county, or city police, according to the campus reports. Probably the best known undercover man in the United States, M. L. Singkata Thomas Tongyai, known at Hobart College in Canandaigua, N.Y., as "Tommy the Traveler," was one of these.

He was hired by the local sheriff's office and, according to an Ontario County grand jury, "advocated violent forms of protest" among student radicals. He took part in a police drug raid on the Hobart campus last June 5.

Other Campus Watchers

But Federal agencies, particularly the Federal Bureau of Investigation and United States Army intelligence, have also been watching campuses.

A series of United States Senate committee hearings have detailed the extensive surveillance activities of the Army at such widely separated places as New York University, Northwestern University and Colorado College. However, the Army, under public pressure, has announced it has cut back its civilian watching programs in the United States.

Recent public disclosure of the contents of F.B.I. files stolen March 8 from the bureau's office in Media, Pa., show that it has regularly used informants to watch radical activities at Haverford College.

The F.B.I. has been active elsewhere, too, according to the campus reports. "There's someone here I think you should meet," a University of Illinois student shouted last fall to a group of protesters in front of the Champaign, Ill., county courthouse. "That man there, in the blue jacket, with the camera, works for the F.B.I."

A young, clean-cut man in a blue windbreaker, whom the student identified by name, said nothing and continued to take pictures of the demonstrators, who were protesting acquittal of a former Champaign police officer charged with murder in the death of a black store clerk.

Drug Control Efforts

Charles Travelstead, special agent at the Urbana, Ill., office of the F.B.I., declined to comment on the incident but said the agency did use "confidential informants who share our concern in the vital areas of terrorism and bombings."

"If an individual cooperated with us and incurred expenses," he continued, "he would be reimbursed for out-of-the-pocket expenses."

Much of the undercover activity surrounds anti-drug efforts by the police, who insist that a man in uniform only scares away pushers and buyers.

A survey released in February by the National Institute of Mental Health reported one-third of the 10,000 students on 50 campuses who were interviewed admitted that they had smoked marijuana and one-seventh of the total reported that they were regular users.

At Yale University, an undercover agent named George Miller last November was involved in the arrest of 90 young people on assorted drug charges. Most were not students, but

were drifters and dropouts among the so-called "street people" who gather near university campuses across the nation.

A leaflet called "View from



Associated Press

M. L. Singkata Thomas Tongyai, who was known as "Tommy the Traveler."

"Behind Bars" was circulated after the arrests and described the activities of Mr. Miller, who was hired by the New Haven police:

"Lots of people are still muttering how Good Ol' George couldn't possibly do that. The stark reality is that George Miller was an incredibly slick agent. He tripped with us, went to rallies with us, turned on with us. He dressed in purple and yellow and wore hip glasses. . . . He waved to us and smiled at us. He was accepted and trusted.

"Some people muttered a few things about not trusting him. But we're all paranoid, right?"

"And in the end, George busted our friends. . . . So what does it all mean about our lives? About who we trust and how we really relate to one another? And how do we prevent another George Miller from coming around again?"

Other surveillance methods are also used.

In Miami, Seymour Gelber, chief assistant State's Attorney for Dade County, made a study of campus police at 210 colleges and universities for a doctoral degree from Florida State University. He said 14.1 per cent of those studied admitted using telephone recording devices. Among 28 colleges of over 20,000 students each, the use of wiretaps was 25 per cent.

Though some of the undercover men say infiltration is a difficult task, others find it easy in the open, accepting atmosphere of college life.

At the University of Kansas, a 19-year-old undercover narcotics agent told The Associated Press:

"I just went into the dorm and acted stupid. I got into conversations and got to know them. Then I asked where I could get the stuff and they told me."

His work led to a series of early morning raids by 150 agents on the campus at Lawrence, Kan.

At the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor Police Lieut. Eugene Staudenmaier makes no pretense of being undercover as he attends almost all political rallies.

Recently he attended a workshop during a campus peace conference. Someone recognized him and complained. He stood up, identified himself and the workshop members voted to allow him to stay. He left a short time later.

"I don't like this polarized situation where police and students are stereotyped as natural enemies," he said.

At Ohio State University last April, two young men up front in a crowd of rioting students were later identified as undercover state policemen. Their pictures were published in the student newspaper, The Lantern.

The university's 58-man campus police force, armed with .38 caliber revolvers, night sticks and chemical disabling agents, keeps an undercover squad of six men. They are supplemented by undercover

Ohio State policemen and Columbus city policemen.

At the University of Texas at Austin there was "Duke," who arrived in a new car with mod clothes and who made fiery speeches during student union demonstrations a year ago. He was indicted, but never arrested, and the charges against him were later dropped.

At Northwestern University it was a girl, "Connie," who moved into the apartment of two off-campus radicals and, according to one Northwestern activist, "hung around the campus and was mildly friendly."

Last May, when the police were called during an argument between her and one of her roommates, she identified herself as a member of the "Red Squad" of the Chicago police department. She disappeared the next day.

At the University of California at Berkeley it was a city police officer, Roland Soliz, who had been on campus under the name of "Roland Guzman." He joined Students for a Democratic Society, the Young Socialist Alliance, the Radical Student Union and various Mexican-American groups before he was uncovered by the student newspaper, The Daily Californian.

Former undercover agents, though useless once identified, do have a future. Gerald Kirk, a University of Chicago student who said he worked for the F.B.I. from 1966 to 1969, has been touring the country in the last few months, speaking six nights a week. The topic of his speech is "Inside the Spider's Web."